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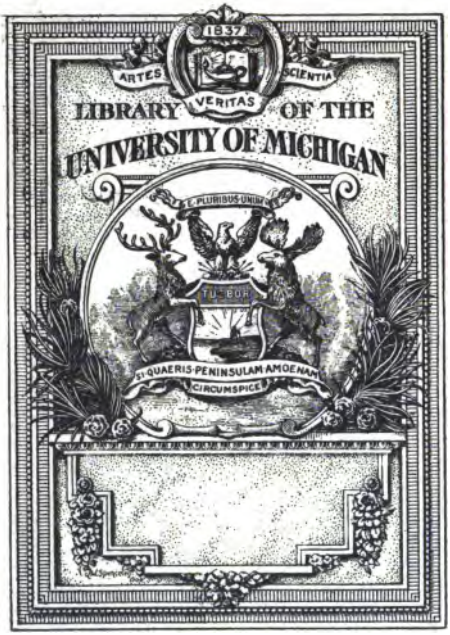
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Weeds by the Wall

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VERSES

BY

MADISON Julius CAWEIN

Author of "Myth and Romance," "Undertones," "Garden of Dreams," "Shapes and Shadows," etc., etc.

"I am God in nature; I am a weed by the wall."

—EMERSON.

LOUISVILLE

JOHN P. MORTON & COMPANY

1901

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BY MADISON J. CAWEIN

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TO

DR. HENRY A. COTTELL

Whose Kind Words of Friendship and Approval have Encouraged me when I Most Needed Encouragement.

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FOREWORD.

In the first rare spring of song,
In my heart's young hours,
In my youth 'twas thus I sang,
Choosing 'mid the flowers:—

"Fair the Dandelion is,
But for me too lowly;
And the winsome Violet
Is, forsooth, too holy.
'But the Touchmenot?' Go to!
What! a face that's speckled
Like a common milking-maid's,
Whom the sun hath freckled.
Then the Wild-Rose is a flirt;
And the trillium Lily,
In her spotless gown, 's a prude,
Sanctified and silly.
By her cap the Columbine,
To my mind, 's too merry;
Gossips, I would sooner wed
Some plebeian Berry.
And the shy Anemone—
Well, her face shows sorrow;
Pale, goodsooth! alive to-day,
Dead and gone to-morrow.
Then that bold-eyed, buxom wench,
Big and blond and lazy,—
She's been chosen overmuch!—
Sirs, I mean the Daisy.
Pleasant persons are they all,
And their virtues many;

'Faith I know but good of each,
And naught ill of any.
But I choose a May-apple;
She shall be my Lady;
Blooming, hidden and refined,
Sweet in places shady."

In my youth 'twas thus I sang,
In my heart's young hours,
In the first rare spring of song,
Choosing 'mid the flowers.
So I hesitated when
Time alone was reckoned
By the hours that Fancy smiled,
Love and Beauty beckoned.
Hard it was for me to choose
From the flowers that flattered;
And the blossom that I chose
Soon lay dead and scattered.
Hard I found it then, ah, me!
Hard I found the choosing;
Harder, harder since I've found,
Ah, too hard the losing.
Haply had I chosen then
From the weeds that tangle
Wayside, woodland and the wall
Of my garden's angle,
I had chosen better, yea,
For these later hours—
Longer last the weeds, and oft
Sweeter are than flowers.

Weeds by the Wall.

A WILD IRIS.

THAT day we wandered 'mid the hills,—so lone
Clouds are not lonelier,— the forest lay
In emerald darkness 'round us. Many a stone
And gnarly root, gray-mossed, made wild our way:
And many a bird the glimmering light along
Showered the golden bubbles of its song.

Then in the valley, where the brook went by,
Silvering the ledges that it rippled from,—
An isolated slip of fallen sky,
Epitomizing heaven in its sum,—
An iris bloomed — blue, as if, flower-disguised,
The gaze of Spring had there materialized.

I have forgotten many things since then —
Much beauty and much happiness and grief;
And toiled and dreamed among my fellow-men,
Rejoicing in the knowledge life is brief.
"'T is winter now," so says each barren bough;
And face and hair proclaim 't is winter now.

I would forget the gladness of that spring!
I would forget that day when she and I,
Between the bird-song and the blossoming,
Went hand in hand beneath the soft spring sky!—
Much is forgotten, yea — and yet, and yet,
The things we would we never can forget.—

The Path by the Creek

Nor I how May then minted treasuries
Of crowfoot gold; and molded out of light
The sorrel's cups, whose elfin chalices
Of limpid spar were streaked with rosy white.
Nor all the stars of twinkling spiderwort,
And mandrake moons with which her brows were girt.

But most of all, yea, it were well for me,
Me and my heart, that I forget that flower,
The wild blue iris, azure fleur-de-lis,
That she and I together found that hour.
Its recollection can but emphasize
The pain of loss, remindful of her eyes.

THE PATH BY THE CREEK.

THERE is a path that leads
Through purple iron-weeds,
By button-bush and mallow
Along a creek;
A path that wildflowers hallow,
That wild birds seek;
Roofed thick with eglantine
And grape and trumpet-vine.

This side, blackberries sweet
Glow cobalt in the heat;
That side, a creamy yellow,
In summertime
The pawpaws slowly mellow;
And autumn's prime
Strews red the Chickasaw,
Persimmon brown and haw.

The Path by the Creek

The glittering dragon-fly,
A wingéd flash, goes by;
And tawny wasp and hornet
Seem gleams that drone;
The beetle, like a garnet,
Slips from the stone;
And butterflies float there,
Spangling with gold the air.

Here the brown thrashers hide,
The chat and cat-bird chide;
The blue kingfisher houses
Above the stream,
And here the heron drowses
Lost in his dream;
The vireo's flitting note
Haunts all the wild remote.

And now a cow's slow bell
Tinkles along the dell;
Where breeze-dropped petals winnow
From blossomy limbs
On waters, where the minnow,
Faint-twinkling, swims;
Where, in the root-arched shade,
Slim prisms of light are laid.

When in the tangled thorn
The new-moon hangs a horn,
Or, 'mid the sunset's islands,
Guides a canoe,
The brown owl in the silence
Calls, and the dew
Beads here its orbs of damp,
Each one a firefly lamp.

The Path by the Creek

Then when the night is still
Here sings the whippoorwill;
And stealthy sounds of crickets,
And winds that pass,
Whispering, through bramble thickets
Along the grass,
Faint with far scents of hay,
Seem feet of dreams astray.

And where the water shines
Dark through tree-twisted vines,
Some water-spirit, dreaming,
Braids in her hair
A star's reflection; seeming
A jewel there;
While all the sweet night long
Ripples her quiet song. . . .

Would I could imitate,
O path, thy happy state!
Making my life all beauty,
All bloom and beam;
Knowing no other duty
Than just to dream,
And far from pain and woe
Lead feet that come and go.

Leading to calm content,
O'er ways the Master went,
Through lowly things and humble,
To peace and love;
Teaching the lives that stumble
To look above,
Forget the world of toil
And all its sad turmoil.

THE ROAD HOME.

OVER the hills, as the pewee flies,
Under the blue of the Southern skies;
Over the hills, where the red-bird wings
Like a scarlet blossom, or sits and sings:

Under the shadow of rock and tree,
Where the warm wind drones with the honey-bee;
And the tall wild-carrots around you sway
Their lace-like flowers of cloudy gray:

By the black-cohosh with its pearly plume
A-nod in the woodland's odorous gloom;
By the old rail-fence, in the elder's shade,
That the myriad hosts of the weeds invade:

Where the butterfly-weed, like a coal of fire,
Blurs orange-red through bush and brier;
Where the pennyroyal and mint smell sweet,
And blackberries tangle the summer heat,

The old road leads; then crosses the creek,
Where the minnow dartles, a silvery streak;
Where the cows wade deep through the blue-eyed grass,
And the flickering dragonflies gleaming pass.

That road is easy, however long,
Which wends with beauty as toil with song;
And the road we follow shall lead us straight
Past creek and wood to a farmhouse gate.

Past hill and hollow, whence scents are blown
Of dew-wet clover that scythes have mown;
To a house that stands with porches wide
And gray low roof on the green hill-side.

A Twilight Moth

Colonial, stately; 'mid shade and shine
Of the locust-tree and the Southern pine;
With its orchard acres and meadowlands
Stretched out before it like welcoming hands.

And gardens, where, in the myrrh-sweet June,
Magnolias blossom with many a moon
Of fragrance; and, in the feldspar light
Of August, roses bloom red and white.

In a woodbine arbor, a perfumed place,
A slim girl sits with a happy face;
Her bonnet by her, a sunbeam lies
On her lovely hair, in her earnest eyes.

Her eyes, as blue as the distant deeps
Of the heavens above where the high hawk sleeps;
A book beside her, wherein she read
Till she saw *him* coming, she heard *his* tread.

Come home at last; come back from the war;
In his eyes a smile, on his brow a scar:
To the South come back — who wakes from her dream
To the love and peace of a new regime.

A TWILIGHT MOTH.

DUSK is thy dawn; when Eve puts on her state
Of gold and purple in the marbled west,
Thou comest forth like some embodied trait,
Or dim conceit, a lily-bud confessed;
Or, of a rose, the visible wish; that, white,
Goes softly messengering through the night,
Whom each expectant flower makes its guest.

A Twilight Moth

All day the primroses have thought of thee,
  Their golden heads close-haremed from the heat ;
All day the mystic moonflowers silkenly
  Veiled snowy faces, — that no bee might greet
Or butterfly that, weighed with pollen, passed ;—
Keeping Sultana charms for thee, at last,
  Their lord, who comest to salute each sweet.

Cool-throated flowers that avoid the day's
  Too fervid kisses ; every bud that drinks
The tipsy dew and to the starlight plays
  Nocturnes of fragrance, thy winged shadow links
In bonds of secret brotherhood and faith ;
O bearer of their order's shibboleth,
  Like some pale symbol fluttering o'er these pinks.

What dost thou whisper in the balsam's ear
  That sets it blushing, or the hollyhock's,—
A syllabled silence that no man may hear,—
  As dreamily upon its stem it rocks ?
What spell dost bear from listening plant to plant,
Like some white witch, some ghostly ministrant,
  Some spectre of some perished flower of phlox ?

O voyager of that universe which lies
  Between the four walls of this garden fair,—
Whose constellations are the fireflies
  That wheel their instant courses everywhere,—
'Mid fairy firmaments wherein one sees
Mimic Boötes and the Pleiades,
  Thou steerest like some fairy ship-of-air.

Gnome-wrought of moonbeam fluff and gossamer,
  Silent as scent, perhaps thou chariotest
Mab or king Oberon ; or, haply, her

His queen, Titania, on some midnight quest.—
O for the herb, the magic euphrasy,
That should unmask thee to mine eyes, ah, me!
And all that world at which my soul hath guessed!

ALONG THE STREAM.

WHERE the violet shadows brood
Under cottonwoods and beeches,
Through whose leaves the restless reaches
Of the river glance, I've stood,
While the red-bird and the thrush
Set to song the morning hush.

There,— when woodland hills encroach
On the shadowy winding waters,
And the bluets, April's daughters,
At the darling Spring's approach,
Star their myriads through the trees,—
All the land is one with peace.

Under some imposing cliff,
That, with bush and tree and boulder,
Thrusts a gray, gigantic shoulder
O'er the stream, I've oared a skiff,
While great clouds of berg-white hue
Lounged along the noonday blue.

There,— when harvest heights impend
Over shores of rippling summer,
And to greet the fair new-comer,—
June,— the wildrose thickets bend
In a million blossoms dressed,—
All the land is one with rest.

The Cricket

On some rock, where gaunt the oak
  Reddens and the sombre cedar
  Darkens, like a sachem leader,
I have lain and watched the smoke
  Of the steamboat, far away,
  Trailed athwart the dying day.

There,— when margin waves reflect
  Autumn colors, gay and sober,
  And the Indian-girl, October,
Wampum-like in berries decked,
  Sits beside the leaf-strewn streams,—
  All the land is one with dreams.

Through the bottoms where,— out-tossed
  By the wind's wild hands,— ashiver
  Lean the willows o'er the river,
I have walked in sleet and frost,
  While beneath the cold round moon,
  Frozen, gleamed the long lagoon.

There,— when leafless woods uplift
  Spectral arms the storm-blasts splinter,
  And the hoary trapper, Winter,
Builds his camp of ice and drift,
  With his snow-pelts furred and shod,—
  All the land is one with God.

THE CRICKET.

I.

FIRST of the insect choir, in the spring
  We hear his faint voice fluttering in the grass,
  Beneath some blossom's rosy covering
Or frond of fern upon a wildwood pass.

The Cricket

When in the marsh, in clamorous orchestras,
The shrill hylodes pipe; when, in the haw's
  Bee-swarming blooms, or tasseling sassafras,
Sweet threads of silvery song the sparrow draws,
  Bow-like, athwart the vibrant atmosphere,—
  Like some dim dream low-breathed in slumber's ear,—
    We hear his "Cheer, cheer, cheer."

II.

All summer through the mellowing meadows thrill
  To his blithe music. Be it day or night,
Close gossip of the grass, on field and hill
  He serenades the silence with delight:
Silence, that hears the melon slowly split
With ripeness; and the plump peach, hornet-bit,
  Loosen and fall; and everywhere the white,
Warm, silk-like stir of leafy lights that flit
  As breezes blow; above which, loudly clear,—
  Like joy who sings of life and has no fear,—
    We hear his "Cheer, cheer, cheer."

III.

Then in the autumn, by the waterside,
  Leaf-huddled; or along the weed-grown walks,
He dirges low the flowers that have died,
  Or with their ghosts holds solitary talks.
Lover of warmth, all day above the click
And crunching of the sorghum-press, through thick
  Sweet steam of juice; all night when, white as chalk,
The hunter's-moon hangs o'er the rustling rick,
  Within the barn 'mid munching cow and steer,—
  Soft as a memory the heart holds dear,—
    We hear his "Cheer, cheer, cheer."

IV.

Kinsman and cousin of the Faëry Race,
All winter long he sets his sober mirth,—
That brings good-luck to many a fire-place,—
To folk-lore song and story of the hearth.
Between the back-log's bluster and the slim
High twittering of the kettle,— sounds that hymn
Home-comforts,— when, outside, the starless Earth
Is icicled in every laden limb,—
Defying frost and all the sad and sear,—
Like love that dies not and is always near,—
We hear his "Cheer, cheer, cheer."

VOICES.

WHEN blood-root blooms and trillium flowers
Unclasp their stars to sun and rain,
My heart strikes hands with winds and showers
And wanders in the woods again.

O urging impulse, born of spring,
That makes glad April of my soul,
No bird, however wild of wing,
Is more impatient of control.

Impetuous of pulse it beats
Within my blood and bears me hence;
Above the housetops and the streets
I hear its happy eloquence.

It tells me all that I would know,
Of birds and buds, of blooms and bees;
I seem to *hear* the blossoms blow,
And leaves unfolding on the trees.

The Grasshopper

I seem to hear the blue-bells ring
  Faint purple peals of fragrance; and
The honey-throated poppies fling
  Their golden laughter o'er the land.

It calls to me; it sings to me;
  I hear its far voice night and day;
I can not choose but go when tree
  And flower clamor, "Come, away!"

THE GRASSHOPPER.

WHAT joy you take in making hotness hotter,
  In emphasizing dullness with your buzz,
  Making monotony more monotonous!
When Summer comes, and drouth hath dried the water
In all the creeks, we hear your ragged rasp
  Filing the stillness. Or,—as urchins beat
A stagnant pond whereon the bubbles gasp,—
  Your switch-like music whips the midday heat.
O bur of sound caught in the Summer's hair,
    We hear you everywhere!

We hear you in the vines and berry-brambles,
  Along the unkempt lanes, among the weeds,
  Amid the shadeless meadows, gray with seeds,
And by the wood 'round which the rail-fence rambles,
Sawing the sunlight with your sultry saw.
  Or,—like to tomboy truants, at their play
With noisy mirth among the barn's deep straw,—
  You sing away the careless summer-day.
O brier-like voice that clings in idleness
    To Summer's drowsy dress!

The Tree Toad

You tramp of insects, vagrant and unheeding,
Improvident, who of the summer make
One long green mealtime, and for winter take
No care, aye singing or just merely feeding!
Happy-go-lucky vagabond,—'though frost
Shall pierce, ere long, your green coat or your brown,
And pinch your body,— let no song be lost,
But as you lived into your grave go down —
Like some small poet with his little rhyme,
Forgotten of all time.

THE TREE TOAD.

I.

SECLUDED, solitary on some underbough,
Or cradled in a leaf, 'mid glimmering light,
Like Puck thou crouchest: Haply watching how
The slow toad-stool comes bulging, moony white,
Through loosening loam; or how, against the night,
The glow-worm gathers silver to endow
The darkness with; or how the dew conspires
To hang at dusk with lamps of chilly fires
Each blade that shrivels now.

II.

O vague confederate of the whippoorwill,
Of owl and cricket and the katydid!
Thou gatherest up the silence in one shrill
Vibrating note and send'st it where, half hid
In cedars, twilight sleeps — each azure lid
Drooping a line of golden eyeball still.—
Afar, yet near, I hear thy dewy voice
Within the Garden of the Hours apoise
On dusk's deep daffodil.

III.

Minstrel of moisture! silent when high noon
  Shows her tanned face among the thirsting clover
And parching meadows, thy tenebrious tune
  Wakes with the dew or when the rain is over.
  Thou troubadour of wetness and damp lover
Of all cool things! admitted comrade boon
  Of twilight's hush, and little intimate
  Of eve's first fluttering star and delicate
    Round rim of rainy moon!

IV.

Art trumpeter of Dwarfland? does thy horn
  Inform the gnomes and goblins of the hour
When they may gambol under haw and thorn,
  Straddling each winking web and twinkling flower?
  Or bell-ringer of Elfland? whose tall tower
The liriodendron is? from whence is borne
  The elfin music of thy bell's deep bass,
  To summon fairies to their starlit maze,
    To summon them or warn.

THE SCREECH-OWL.

WHEN, one by one, the stars have trembled through
  Eve's shadowy hues of violet, rose, and fire —
As on a pansy-bloom the limpid dew
  Orbs its bright beads; — and, one by one, the choir
  Of insects wakes on nodding bush and brier:
Then through the woods — where wandering winds pursue
  A ceaseless whisper — like an eery lyre
Struck in the Erl-king's halls, where ghosts and dreams
Hold revelry, your goblin music screams,
  Shivering and strange as some strange thought come true.

The Chipmunk

Brown as the agaric that frills dead trees,
  Or those fantastic fungi of the woods
That crowd the dampness — are you kin to these
  In some mysterious way that still eludes
  My fancy ? you, who haunt the solitudes
With witch-like wailings ? voice, that seems to freeze
  Out of the darkness, — like the scent which broods,
Rank and rain-sodden, over autumn nooks, —
That, to the mind, might well suggest such looks,
  Ghastly and gray, as pale clairvoyance sees.

You people night with weirdness : lone and drear,
  Beneath the stars, you cry your wizard runes ;
And in the haggard silence, filled with fear,
  Your shuddering hoot seems some bleak grief that croons
  Mockery and terror ; or, — beneath the moon's
Cloud-hurrying glimmer, — to the startled ear,
  Crazed, madman snatches of old, perished tunes,
The witless wit of outcast Edgar there
In the wild night ; or, wan with all despair,
  The mirthless laughter of the Fool in Lear.

THE CHIPMUNK.

HE makes a roadway of the crumbling fence,
  Or on the fallen tree, — brown as a leaf
  Fall stripes with russet, — gambols down the dense
Green twilight of the woods. We see not whence
  He comes, nor whither — 't is a time too brief ! —
He vanishes ; — swift carrier of some Fay,
  Some pixy steed that haunts our child-belief —
A goblin glimpse from woodland way to way.

Love and a Day

What harlequin mood of nature qualified
  Him so with happiness? and limbed him with
Such young activity as winds, that ride
The ripples, have, that dance on every side?
  As sunbeams know, that urge the sap and pith
Through hearts of trees? yet made him to delight,
  Gnome-like, in darkness,— like a moonlight myth,—
Lairing in labyrinths of the under night.

Here, by a rock, beneath the moss, a hole
  Leads to his home, the den wherein he sleeps;
Lulled by near noises of the cautious mole
Tunnelling its mine — like some ungainly Troll —
  Or by the tireless cricket there that keeps
Picking its drowsy and monotonous lute;
  Or slower sounds of grass that creeps and creeps,
And trees unrolling mighty root on root.

Such is the music of his sleeping hours.
  Day hath another —'t is a melody
He trips to, made by the assembled flowers,
And light and fragrance laughing 'mid the bowers,
  And ripeness busy with the acorn-tree.
Such strains, perhaps, as filled with mute amaze —
  The silent music of Earth's ecstasy —
The Satyr's soul, the Faun of classic days.

LOVE AND A DAY.

I.

IN girandoles of gladioles
  The day had kindled flame;
And Heaven a door of gold and pearl
Unclosed when Morning,— like a girl,
A red rose twisted in a curl,—
  Down sapphire stairways came.

Love and a Day

Said I to Love: "What must I do?
What shall I do? what can I do?"
Said I to Love: "What must I do?
All on a summer's morning."

Said Love to me: "Go woo, go woo."
Said Love to me: "Go woo.
If she be milking, follow, O!
And in the clover hollow, O!
While through the dew the bells clang clear,
Just whisper it into her ear,
All on a summer's morning."

II.

Of honey and heat and weed and wheat
The day had made perfume;
And Heaven a tower of turquoise raised,
Whence Noon, like some wan woman, gazed —
A sunflower withering at her waist —
Within a crystal room.

Said I to Love: "What must I do?
What shall I do? what can I do?"
Said I to Love: "What must I do,
All in the summer nooning?"

Said Love to me: "Go woo, go woo."
Said Love to me: "Go woo.
If she be 'mid the rakers, O!
Among the harvest acres, O!
While every breeze brings scents of hay,
Just hold her hand and not take 'nay,'
All in the summer nooning."

III.

With song and sigh and cricket cry
  The day had mingled rest;
And Heaven a casement opened wide
Of opal, whence, like some young bride,
The Twilight leaned, all starry-eyed,
  A moonflower on her breast.

Said I to Love: "What must I do?
What shall I do? what can I do?"
Said I to Love: "What must I do,
  All in the summer gloaming?"

Said Love to me: "Go woo, go woo."
  Said Love to me: "Go woo.
Go meet her at the trysting, O!
And, 'spite of her resisting, O!
Beneath the stars and afterglow,
Just clasp her close and kiss her so,
  All in the summer gloaming."

DROUTH.

I.

THE hot sunflowers by the glaring pike
  Lift shields of sultry brass; the teasel tops,
Pink-thorned, advance with bristling spike on spike
  Against the furious sunlight. Field and copse
  Are sick with summer: now, with breathless stops,
The locusts cymbal; now grasshoppers beat
  Their castanets: and rolled in dust, a team,—
  Like some mean life wrapped in its sorry dream,—
An empty wagon rattles through the heat.

Drouth

II.

Where now the blue, blue flags ? the flow'rs whose mouths
  Are moist and musky ? Where the sweet-breathed mint,
That made the brook-bank herby ? Where the South's
  Wild morning-glories, rich in hues, that hint
  At coming showers that the rainbows tint ?
Where all the blossoms that the wildwood knows ? —
  The frail oxalis hidden in its leaves ;
  The Indian-pipe, pale as a soul that grieves ;
The freckled touch-me-not and forest-rose.

III.

Dead ! dead ! all dead besides the drouth-burnt brook,
  Shrouded in moss or in the shriveled grass.
Where waved their bells, — from which the wild-bee shook
  The dew-drop once, — gaunt, in a nightmare mass,
  The rank weeds crowd ; through which the cattle pass,
Thirsty and lean, seeking some meagre spring,
  Closed in with thorns, on which stray bits of wool
  The panting sheep have left, that sought the cool,
From morn till evening wearily wandering.

IV.

No bird is heard ; no throat to whistle awake
  The sleepy hush ; to let its music leak
Fresh, bubble-like, through bloom-roofs of the brake :
  Only the green-blue heron, famine weak, —
  Searching the stale pools of the minnowless creek, —
Utters its call ; and then the rain-crow, too,
  False prophet now, croaks to the stagnant air ;
  While overhead, — still as if painted there, —
A buzzard hangs, black on the burning blue.

BEFORE THE RAIN.

BEFORE the rain, low in the obscure east,
Weak and morose the moon hung, sickly gray;
Around its disc the storm mists, cracked and creased,
Wove an enormous web, wherein it lay
Like some white spider hungry for its prey.
Vindictive looked the scowling firmament,
In which each star, that flashed a dagger ray,
Seemed filled with malice of some dark intent.

The marsh-frog croaked; and underneath the stone
The peevish cricket raised a creaking cry.
Within the world these sounds were heard alone,
Save when the ruffian wind swept from the sky,
Making each tree like some sad spirit sigh;
Or shook the clumsy beetle from its weed,
That, in the drowsy darkness, bungling by,
Sharded the silence with its feverish speed.

Slowly the tempest gathered. Hours passed
Before was heard the thunder's sullen drum
Rumbling night's hollow; and the Earth at last,
Restless with waiting,—like a woman, dumb
With doubting of the love that should have clomb
Her casement hours ago,—avowed again,
'Mid protestations, joy that he had come.
And all night long I heard the Heavens explain.

THE BROKEN DROUTH.

IT seemed the listening forest held its breath
Before some vague and unapparent form
Of fear, approaching with the wings of death,
On the impending storm.

Feud

Above the hills, big, bellying clouds loomed, black
And ominous, yet silent as the blue
That pools calm heights of heaven, deepening back
'Twixt clouds of snowdrift hue.

Then instantly, as when a multitude
Shout riot and war through some tumultuous town,
Innumerable voices swept the wood
As wild the wind rushed down.

And fierce and few, as when a strong man weeps,
Great rain-drops dashed the dust; and, overhead,
Ponderous and vast down the prodigious deeps,
Went slow the thunder's tread.

And swift and furious, as when giants fence,
The lightning foils of tempest went insane;
Then far and near sonorous Earth grew dense
With long sweet sweep of rain.

FEUD.

A MILE of lane,— hedged high with iron-weeds
And dying daisies,— white with sun, that leads
Downward into a wood; through which a stream
Steals like a shadow; over which is laid
A bridge of logs, worn deep by many a team,
Sunk in the tangled shade.

Far off a wood-dove lifts its lonely cry;
And in the sleepy silver of the sky
A gray hawk wheels scarce larger than a hand.
From point to point the road grows worse and worse,
Until that place is reached where all the land
Seems burdened with some curse.

Unanointed

A ragged fence of pickets, warped and sprung,—
On which the fragments of a gate are hung,—
Divides a hill, the fox and ground-hog haunt,
  A wilderness of briers; o'er whose tops
A battered barn is seen, low-roofed and gaunt,
  'Mid fields that know no crops.

Fields over which a path, o'erwhelmed with burs
And ragweeds, noisy with the grasshoppers,
Leads,— lost, irresolute as paths the cows
  Wear through the woods,— unto a woodshed; then,
With wrecks of windows, to a huddled house,
  Where men have murdered men.

A house, whose tottering chimney, clay and rock,
Is seamed and crannied; whose lame door and lock
Are bullet-bored; around which, there and here,
  Are sinister stains.—One dreads to look around.—
The place seems thinking of that time of fear
  And dares not breathe a sound.

Within is emptiness: the sunlight falls
On faded journals papering its walls;
On advertisement chromos, torn with time,
  Around a hearth where wasps and spiders build.—
The house is dead; meseems that night of crime
  It, too, was shot and killed.

UNANOINTED.

I.

UPON the Siren-haunted seas, between Fate's mythic shores,
  Within a world of moon and mist, where dusk and daylight wed,
I see a phantom galley and its hull is banked with oars,
With ghostly oars that move to song, a song of dreams long dead:

Unanointed

"Oh, we are sick of rowing here!
With toil our arms are numb;
With smiting year on weary year
Salt-furrows of the foam:
Our journey's end is never near,
And will no nearer come —
Beyond our reach the shores appear
Of far Elysium."

II.

Within a land of cataracts and mountains old and sand,
Beneath whose heavens ruins rise, o'er which the stars burn red,
I see a spectral cavalcade with crucifix in hand
And shadowy armor march and sing, a song of dreams long dead:

"Oh, we are weary marching on!
Our limbs are travel-worn;
With cross and sword from dawn to dawn
We wend with raiment torn:
The leagues to go, the leagues we've gone
Are sand and rock and thorn —
The way is long to Avalon
Beyond the deeps of morn."

III.

They are the curs'd! the souls who yearn and evermore pursue
The vision of a vain desire, a splendor far ahead;
To whom God gives the poet's dream without the grasp to do,
The artist's hope without the scope between the quick and dead:

The End of All

I, too, am weary toiling where
The winds and waters beat;
When shall I ease the oar I bear
And rest my tired feet?
When will the white moons cease to glare,
The red suns veil their heat?
And from the heights blow sweet the air
Of Love's divine retreat?

THE END OF ALL.

I.

I do not love you now,
O narrow heart, that had no heights but pride!
You, whom mine fed; to whom yours still denied
Food when mine hungered, and of which love died —
I do not love you now.

II.

I do not love you now,
O shallow soul, with depths but to deceive!
You, whom mine watered; to whom yours did give
No drop to drink to help my love to live —
I do not love you now.

III.

I do not love you now!
But did I love you in the old, old way,
And knew you loved me —'though the words should slay
Me and your love forever, I would say,
"I do not love you now!
I do not love you now!"

SUNSET AND STORM.

DEEP with divine tautology,
The sunset's mighty mystery
Again has traced the scroll-like West
With hieroglyphs of burning gold:
Forever new, forever old,
Its miracle is manifest.

Time lays the scroll away. And now
Above the hills a giant brow
Night lifts of cloud; and from her arm,
Barbaric black, upon the world,
With thunder, wind and fire, is hurled
Her awful argument of storm.

What part, O man, is yours in such?
Whose awe and wonder are in touch
With Nature,— speaking rapture to
Your soul,— yet leaving in your reach
No human word of thought or speech
Expressive of the thing you view.

BEECH BLOOMS.

THE wild oxalis
Among the valleys
Lifts up its chalice
Of pink and pearl;
And, balsam-breathing,
From out their sheathing,
The myriad wreathing
Green leaves uncurl.

Beech Blooms

The whole world brightens
With spring, that lightens
The foot that frightens
  The building thrush;
Where water tosses
On ferns and mosses
The squirrel crosses
  The beechen hush.

And vision on vision,—
Like ships elysian
On some white mission,—
  Sails cloud on cloud;
With scents of clover
The winds brim over,
And in the cover
  The stream is loud.

'Twixt bloom that blanches
The orchard branches
Old farms and ranches
  Gleam in the gloam;
'Mid blossoms blowing,
Through fields for sowing,
The cows come lowing,
  The cows come home.

Where ways are narrow,
A vesper-sparrow
Flits like an arrow
  Of living rhyme;
The red sun poises,
And farmyard noises
Mix with glad voices
  Of milking-time.

Worship

When dusk disposes
Of all its roses,
And darkness closes,
And work is done,
A moon's white feather
In starry weather
And two together
Whose hearts are one.

WORSHIP.

I.

The mornings raise
Voices of gold in the Almighty's praise;
The sunsets soar
In choral crimson from far shore to shore:
Each is a blast,
Reverberant, of color,— seen as vast
Concussions,— that the vocal firmament
In worship sounds o'er every continent.

II.

Not for our ears
The cosmic music of the rolling spheres,
That sweeps the skies!
Music we hear, but only with our eyes.
For all too weak
Our mortal frames to bear the words these speak,
Those detonations that we name the dawn
And sunset — hues Earth's harmony puts on.

UNHEARD.

ALL things are wrought of melody,
Unheard, yet full of speaking spells;
Within the rock, within the tree,
A soul of music dwells.

A mute symphonic sense that thrills
The silent frame of mortal things;
Its heart beats in the ancient hills,
In every flower sings.

To harmony all growth is set —
Each seed is but a music mote,
From which each plant, each violet,
Evolves its purple note.

Compact of melody, the rose
Woos the soft wind with strain on strain
Of crimson; and the lily blows
Its white bars to the rain.

The trees are pæans; and the grass
One long green fugue beneath the sun —
Song is their life; and all shall pass,
Shall cease, when song is done.

REINCARNATION.

HIGH in the place of outraged liberty,
He ruled the world, an emperor and god
His iron armies swept the land and sea,
And conquered nations trembled at his nod.

On Chenoweth's Run

By him the love that fills man's soul with light,
And makes a Heaven of Earth, was crucified;
Lust-crowned he lived, yea, lived in God's despite,
And old in infamies, a king he died.

Justice begins now.—Many centuries
In some vile body must his soul atone
As slave, as beggar, loathsome with disease,
Less than the dog at which we fling a stone.

ON CHENOWETH'S RUN.

I THOUGHT of the road through the glen,
With its hawk's nest high in the pine;
With its rock, where the fox had his den,
'Mid tangles of sumach and vine,
Where she swore to be mine.

I thought of the creek and its banks,
Now glooming, now gleaming with sun;
The rustic bridge builded of planks,
The bridge over Chenoweth's Run,
Where I wooed her and won.

I thought of the house in the lane,
With its pinks and its sweet mignonette;
Its fence and the gate with the chain,
Its porch where the roses hung wet,
Where I kissed her and met.

Then I thought of the family graves,
Walled rudely with stone, in the West,
Where the sorrowful cedar-tree waves,
And the wind is a spirit distressed,
Where they laid her to rest.

And my soul, overwhelmed with despair,
  Cried out on the city and mart! —
How I longed, how I longed to be there,
  Away from the struggle and smart,
    By her and my heart!

By her and my heart in the West, —
  Laid sadly together as one; —
On her grave for a moment to rest,
  Far away from the noise and the sun,
    On Chenoweth's Run.

HOME AGAIN.

Far down the lane
A window pane
Gleams 'mid the trees through night and rain.
The weeds are dense
Through which a fence
Of pickets rambles, none sees whence,
Before a porch, all indistinct of line,
O'er-grown and matted with wistaria-vine.

No thing is heard,
No beast or bird,
Only the rain by which are stirred
The draining leaves,
And trickling eaves
Of crib and barn one scarce perceives;
And garden-beds where old-time flow'rs hang wet
The phlox, the candytuft, and mignonette.

The hour is late —
At any rate
She has not heard him at the gate:
Upon the roof

A Street of Ghosts

The rain was proof
Against his horse's galloping hoof:
And when the old gate with its weight and chain
Creaked, she imagined 't was the wind and rain.

Along he steals
With cautious heels,
And by the lamplit window kneels:
And there she sits,
And rocks and knits
Within the shadowy light that flits
On face and hair, so sweetly sad and gray,
Dreaming of him she thinks is far away.

Upon his cheeks —
Is it the streaks
Of rain, as now the old porch creaks
Beneath his stride?
Then, warm and wide,
The door flings and she's at his side —
"Mother!" — and he, back from the war, her boy,
Kisses her face all streaming wet with joy.

A STREET OF GHOSTS.

THE drowsy day, with half-closed eyes,
Dreams in this quaint forgotten street,
That, like some old-world wreckage, lies, —
Left by the sea's receding beat, —
Far from the city's restless feet.

Abandoned pavements, that the trees'
Huge roots have wrecked, whose flagstones feel
No more the sweep of draperies;
And sunken curbs, whereon no wheel
Grinds, nor the gallant's spur-bound heel.

A Street of Ghosts

Old houses, walled with rotting brick,
Thick-creepered, dormered, weather-vaned,—
Like withered faces, sad and sick,—
Stare from each side, all broken paned,
With battered doors the rain has stained.

And though the day be white with heat,
Their ancient yards are dim and cold;
Where now the toad makes its retreat,
'Mid flower-pots green-caked with mold,
And naught but noisome weeds unfold.

The slow gray slug and snail have trailed
Their slimy silver up and down
The beds where once the moss-rose veiled
Rich beauty; and the mushroom brown
Swells where the lily tossed its crown.

The shadowy scents, that haunt and flit
Along the walks, beneath the boughs,
Seem ghosts of sweethearts here who sit,
Or wander 'round each empty house,
Wrapped in the silence of dead vows.

And, haply, when the evening droops
Her amber eyelids in the west,
Here one might hear the swish of hoops,
Or catch the glint of hat or vest,
As two dim lovers past him pressed.

And, instant as some star's slant flame,
That scores the swarthy cheek of night,
Perhaps behold Colonial dame
And gentleman in stately white
Go glimmering down the pale moonlight.

In powder, patch, and furbelow,
Cocked-hat and sword; and every one,—
Tory and whig of long ago,—
As real as in the days long done,
The courtly days of Washington.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE BEECHES.

IN the shadow of the beeches,
Where the fragile wildflowers bloom;
Where the pensive silence pleaches
Green a roof of cool perfume,
Have you felt an awe imperious
As when, in a church, mysterious
Windows paint with God the gloom?

In the shadow of the beeches,
Where the rock-ledged waters flow;
Where the sun's sloped splendor bleaches
Every wave to foaming snow,
Have you felt a music solemn
As when minster arch and column
Echo organ-worship low?

In the shadow of the beeches,
Where the light and shade are blent;
Where the forest-bird beseeches,
And the breeze is brimmed with scent,—
Is it joy or melancholy
That o'erwhelms us partly, wholly,
To our spirit's betterment?

In the shadow of the beeches
Lay me where no eye perceives;
Where,—like some great arm that reaches
Gently as a love that grieves,—
One gnarled root may clasp me kindly
While the long years, working blindly,
Slowly change my dust to leaves.

REQUIESCAT.

THE roses mourn for her who sleeps
Within the tomb;
For her each lily-flower weeps
Dew and perfume.
In each neglected flower-bed
Each blossom droops its lovely head,—
They miss her touch, they miss her tread,
Her face of bloom,
Of happy bloom.

The very breezes grieve for her,
A lonely grief;
For her each tree is sorrower,
Each blade and leaf.
The foliage rocks itself and sighs,
And to its woe the wind replies,—
They miss her girlish laugh and cries,
Whose life was brief,
Was very brief.

The sunlight, too, seems pale with care,
Or sick with woe;
The memory haunts it of her hair,
Its golden glow.
No more within the bramble-brake
The sleepy bloom is kissed awake —
The sun is sad for her dear sake,
Whose head lies low,
Lies dim and low.

The bird, that sang so sweet, is still
At dusk and dawn;
No more it makes the silence thrill
Of wood and lawn.

The Quest

In vain the buds, when it is near,
Open each pink and perfumed ear,—
The song it sings she will not hear
Who now is gone,
Is dead and gone.

Ah, well she sleeps who loved them well,
The birds and bowers;
The fair, the young, the lovable,
Who once was ours.
Alas! that loveliness must pass!
Must come to lie beneath the grass!
That youth and joy must fade, alas!
And die like flowers,
Earth's sweetest flowers!

THE QUEST.

I.

FIRST I asked the honey-bee,
Busy in the balmy bowers;
Saying, "Sweetheart, tell it me:
Have you seen her, honey-bee?
She is cousin to the flowers—
Wild-rose face and wild-rose mouth,
And the sweetness of the south."—
But it passed me silently.

II.

Then I asked the forest-bird,
Warbling to the woodland waters;
Saying, "Dearest, have you heard,
Have you heard her, forest-bird?
She is one of Music's daughters—
Music is her happy laugh;
Never song so sweet by half."—
But it answered not a word.

III.

Next I asked the evening sky,
  Hanging out its lamps of fire;
Saying, "Loved one, passed she by?
Tell me, tell me, evening sky!
  She, the star of my desire —
Planet-eyed and hair moon-glossed,
Sister whom the Pleiads lost."—
  But it never made reply.

IV.

Where is she? ah, where is she?
  She to whom both love and duty
Bind me, yea, immortally.—
Where is she? ah, where is she?
  Symbol of the Earth-soul's beauty.
I have lost her. Help my heart
Find her, nevermore to part.—
  Woe is me! ah, woe is me!

MEETING AND PARTING.

I.

WHEN from the tower, like some sweet flower,
The bell drops petals of the hour,
That says the world is homing,
My heart puts off its garb of care
And clothes itself in gold and vair,
And hurries forth to meet her there
Within the purple gloaming.

It's — Oh! how slow the hours go,
How dull the moments move!
Till soft and clear the bells I hear,
That say, like music, in my ear,
"Go meet the one you love."

II.

When curved and white, a bugle bright,
The moon blows glamour through the night,
  That sets the world a-dreaming,
My heart, where gladness late was guest,
Puts off its joy, as to my breast
At parting her dear form is pressed,
  Within the moon's faint gleaming.

  It's — Oh ! how fast the hours passed ! —
    They were not slow enough !
  Too soon, too soon, the sinking moon
  Says to my soul, like some sad tune,
    "Come ! part from her you love."

LOVE IN A GARDEN.

I.

BETWEEN the rose's and the canna's crimson,
  Beneath her window in the night I stand ;
The jeweled dew hangs little stars, in rims, on
The white moonflowers — each a spirit hand
That points the path to mystic shadowland.

  Awaken, sweet and fair !
    And add to night thy grace !
  Suffer its loveliness to share
    The white moon of thy face,
  The darkness of thy hair.
    Awaken, sweet and fair !

Love in a Garden

II.

A moth, like down, swings on th' althæa's pistil,—
  Ghost of a tone that haunts its bell's deep dome;—
And in the August-lily's cone of crystal
  A firefly blurs, the lantern of a gnome,
  Green as a gem that gleams through hollow foam.

Approach! the moment flies!
  Thou sweetheart of the South!
Come! mingle with night's mysteries
  The red rose of thy mouth,
The starlight of thine eyes.—
  Approach! the moment flies!

III.

Dim through the dusk, like some unearthly presence,
  Bubbles the Slumber-song of some wild bird;
And with it borne, faint on a breeze-sweet essence,
  The rainy murmur of a fountain's heard—
  As if young lips had breathed a perfumed word.

How long, my love, my bliss!
  How long must I await
With night,—that all impatience is,—
  Thy greeting at the gate,
And at the gate thy kiss?
  How long, my love, my bliss!

FLORIDIAN.

I.

THE cactus and the aloe bloom
Beneath the window of your room;
Your window where, at evenfall,
Beneath the twilight's first pale star,
You linger, tall and spiritual,
And hearken my guitar.

It is the hour
When every flower
Is wooed by moth or bee —
Would, would you were the flower, dear,
And I the moth to draw you near,
To draw you near to me,
My dear,
To draw you near to me.

II.

The jasmine and bignonia spill
Their balm around your windowsill;
The sill where, when magnolia-white,
In foliage mists, the moon hangs far,
You lean with bright deep eyes of night
And hearken my guitar.

It is the hour
When from each flower
The wind woos fragrances —
Would, would you were the flower, love,
And I the wind to breathe above,
To breathe above and kiss,
My love,
To breathe above and kiss.

THE GOLDEN HOUR.

I.

SHE comes,— the dreamy daughter
Of day and night,— a girl,
Who o'er the western water
Lifts up her moon of pearl:
Like some Rebecca at the well,
Who fills her jar of crystal shell,
Down ways of dew, o'er dale and dell,
Dusk comes with dreams of you,
Of you,
Dusk comes with dreams of you.

II.

She comes, the serious sister
Of all the stars that strew
The deeps of God, and glister
Bright on the darkling blue:
Like some loved Ruth, who heaps her arm
With golden gleanings of the farm,
Down fields of stars, where shadows swarm,
Dusk comes with thoughts of you,
Of you,
Dusk comes with thoughts of you.

III.

She comes, and soft winds greet her,
And whispering odors woo;
She is the words and meter
They set their music to:
Like Israfel, a spirit fair,
Whose heart's a silvery dulcimer,
Down listening slopes of earth and air
Dusk comes with love of you,
Of you,
Dusk comes with love of you.

REED CALL FOR APRIL.

I.

WHEN April comes, and pelts with buds
And apple-blooms each orchard space,
And takes the dog-wood-whitened woods
With rain and sunshine of her moods,
Like your fair face, like your fair face:

It's honey for the bloom and dew,
And honey for the heart!
And, oh, to be away with you
Beyond the town and mart.

II.

When April comes, and tints the hills
With gold and beryl that rejoice,
And from her airy apron spills
The laughter of the winds and rills,
Like your young voice, like your young voice:

It's gladness for God's bending blue,
And gladness for the heart!
And, oh, to be away with you
Beyond the town and mart.

III.

When April comes, and binds and girds
The world with warmth that breathes above,
And to the breeze flings all her birds,
Whose songs are welcome as the words
Of you I love, of you I love:

It's music for all things that woo,
And music for the heart!
And, oh, to be away with you
Beyond the town and mart.

"THE YEARS WHEREIN I NEVER KNEW."

THE years, wherein I never knew
Such beauty as is yours,— so fraught
With truth and kindness looking through
Your loveliness,— I count them naught,
O girl, so like a lily wrought!
The years wherein I knew not you.

Ah, let me see you always so!—
A dream that haunts my memory's sight—
Your hair of moonlight, face of snow,
And eyes, blue stars of laughing light,
O girl, so like a lily white!
Through all the years that come and go.

True to you only, in my heart
I wear your spirit miniature,
Sincere in simpleness of art,
That makes my love to still endure,
O girl, so like a lily pure!
Through years that keep us still apart.

MIGNON.

OH, Mignon's mouth is like a rose,
A red, red rose, that half uncurls
Sweet petals o'er a crimson bee:
Or like a shell, that, opening, shows
Within its rosy curve white pearls,
White rows of pearls,
Is Mignon's mouth that smiles at me.

Qui Docet, Discit

Oh, Mignon's eyes are like blue gems,
Two azure gems, that gleam and glow,
Soft sapphires set in ivory:
Or like twin violets, whose stems
Bloom blue beneath the covering snow,
The lidded snow,
Are Mignon's eyes that laugh at me.

O mouth of Mignon, Mignon's eyes!
O eyes of violet, mouth of fire!—
Within which lies all ecstasy
Of tears and kisses and of sighs:—
O mouth, O eyes, and O desire,
O love's desire,
Have mercy on the soul of me!

QUI DOCET, DISCIT.

I.

WHEN all the world was white with flowers,
And Summer, in her sun-built towers,
Stood smiling 'mid her handmaid Hours,
Who robed her limbs for bridal;
Somewhere between the golden sands
And purple hills of Folly's lands,
Love, with a laugh, let go our hands,
And left our sides to idle.

II.

Now all the world is red with doom,
And Autumn, in her frost-carved room,
Bends darkly o'er the gipsy loom
Of memories she weaves there;
Who knocks at night upon the door,
All travel-worn and pale and poor?—
Open! and let him in once more,
The Love that stands and grieves there.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

I.

A SUNBEAM and a drop of dew
Lay on a red rose in the South :
God took the three and made her mouth,
Her sweet, sweet mouth,
So red of hue,—
The burning baptism of His kiss
Still fills my heart with heavenly bliss.

II.

A dream of truth and love come true
Slept on a star in daybreak skies :
God mingled these and made her eyes,
Her dear, dear eyes,
So gray of hue,—
The high communion of His gaze
Still fills my soul with deep amaze.

HELEN.

HEAPED in raven loops and masses
Over temples smooth and fair,
Have you marked it, as she passes,
Gleam and shadow mingled there,—
Braided strands of midnight air,—
Helen's hair ?

Deep with dreams and starry mazes
Of the thought that in them lies,
Have you seen them, as she raises
Them in gladness or surprise,—
Two gray gleams of daybreak skies,—
Helen's eyes ?

A Cameo

Moist with dew and honied wafters
  Of a music sweet that slips,
Have you marked them, brimmed with laughter's
  Song and sunshine to their tips,
  Rose-buds whence the fragrance drips,—
    Helen's lips ?

He who sees her needs must love her :
  But, beware ! avoid love's dart !
He who loves her must discover
  Nature overlooked one part,
  In this masterpiece of art—
    Helen's heart.

A CAMEO.

WHY speak of Giamschid rubies
  Whence rosy starlight drips ?
I know a richer crimson,—
  The ruby of her lips.

Why speak of pearls of Oman
  That shells of ocean sheathe ?
I know a purer nacre,—
  The white pearls of her teeth.

Why tell me of the sapphires
  That Kings and Khalifs prize ?
I know a lovelier azure,—
  The sapphires of her eyes.

Go search the far Earth over,
  Go search the farthest sea,
You will not find a cameo
  Like her God carved for me.

LA JEUNESSE ET LA MORT.

I.

UNTO her fragrant face and hair,—
As some wild bee unto a rose,
That blooms in splendid beauty there
Within the South,— my longing goes:
My longing, that is over fain
To call her mine, but all in vain;
Since jealous Death, as each one knows,
Is guardian of La belle Heléne;
Of her whose face is very fair—
To my despair,
Sweet belle Heléne.

II.

The sweetness of her face suggests
The sensuous scented Jacqueminots;
Magnolia blooms her throat and breasts;
Her hands long lilies in repose:
Fair flowers all without a stain,
That grow for Death to pluck again,
Within that garden's radiant close,
The body of La belle Heléne;
The garden glad that she suggests,—
That Death invests,
Sweet belle Heléne.

III.

God had been kinder to me,—when
He dipped His hands in fires and snows
And made you like a flow'r to ken,
A flow'r that in Earth's garden grows,—
Had He, for pleasure or for pain,
Instead of Death in that demesne,
Made Love the gardener to that rose,
Your loveliness, O belle Heléne;
God had been kinder to me then—
And to all men,
Sweet belle Heléne.

LOVE AND LOSS.

LOSS molds our lives in many ways,
And fills our souls with guesses;
Upon our hearts sad hands it lays
Like some grave priest that blesses.

Far better than the love we win,
That earthly passions leaven,
Is love we lose, that knows no sin,
That points the path to Heaven.

Love, whose soft shadow brightens Earth,
Through whom our dreams are nearest;
And loss, through whom we see the worth
Of all that we held dearest.

Not joy it is, but misery
That chastens us, and sorrow; —
Perhaps to make us all that we
Expect beyond To-morrow.

Within that life where time and fate
Are not; that knows no seeming:
That world to which death keeps the gate
Where love and loss sit dreaming.

SUNSET CLOUDS.

LOW clouds, the lightning veins and cleaves,
Torn from the forest of the storm,
Sweep westward like enormous leaves
O'er field and farm.

Masked

And in the west, on burning skies,
  Their wrath is quenched, their hate is hushed,
And deep their drifted thunder lies
    With splendor flushed.

The black turns gray, the gray turns gold;
  And, seaed in deeps of radiant rose,
Summits of fire, manifold
    They now repose.

What dreams they bring! what thoughts reveal!
  That have their source in loveliness,
Through which the doubts I often feel
    Grow less and less.

Through which I see that other night,
  That cloud called Death, transformed of Love
To flame, and pointing with its light
    To life above.

MASKED.

LYING alone I dreamed a dream last night:
  Methought that Joy had come to comfort me
For all the past, its suffering and slight,
  Yet in my heart I felt this could not be.

All that he said unreal seemed and strange,
  Too beautiful to last beyond to-morrow;
Then suddenly his features seemed to change,—
  The mask of joy dropped from the face of Sorrow.

OUT OF THE DEPTHS.

I.

LET me forget her face!
So fresh, so lovely! the abiding place
Of tears and smiles that won my heart to her;
Of dreams and moods that moved my soul's dim deeps,
As strong winds stir
Dark waters where the starlight glimmering sleeps.—
In every lineament the mind can trace,
Let me forget her face!

II.

Let me forget her form!
Soft and seductive, that contained each charm,
Each grace the sweet word maidenhood implies;
And all the sensuous youth of line and curve,
That makes men's eyes
Bondsmen of beauty eager still to serve.—
In every part that memory can warm,
Let me forget her form!

III.

Let me forget her, God!
Her who made honeyed love a bitter rod
To scourge my heart with, barren with despair;
To tear my soul with, sick with vain desire!—
Oh, hear my prayer!
Out of the hell of love's unquenchable fire
I cry to thee, with face against the sod,
Let me forget her, God!

RICHES.

WHAT mines the morning heavens unfold!
What far Alaskas of the skies!
That, veined with elemental gold,
Sierra on Sierra rise.

Heap up the gold of all the world,
The ore that makes men fools and slaves;
What is it to the gold, cloud-curled,
That rivers through the sunset's caves!

Search Earth for riches all who will,
The gold that soils, that turns to dust—
Be mine the wealth no thief can steal,
The gold of God that can not rust.

BEAUTY AND ART.

THE gods are dead; but still for me
Lives on in wildwood brook and tree
Each myth, each old divinity.

For me still laughs among her rocks
The Naiad; and the Dryad's locks
Drop perfume on the wild-flower flocks.

The Satyr hoof still prints the loam;
And, whiter than the wind-blown foam,
The Oread haunts her mountain home.

To him, whose mind is fain to dwell
With loveliness no time can quell,
All things are real, imperishable.

The Age of Gold

To him — whatever facts may say —
  Who sees the soul beneath the clay,
Is proof of a diviner day.

The very stars and flowers preach
  A gospel old as God, and teach
Philosophy a child may reach;

That can not die, that shall not cease,
  That lives through idealities
Of beauty, ev'n as Rome and Greece;

That lift the soul above the clod,
  And, working out some period
Of art, are part and proof of God.

THE AGE OF GOLD.

THE clouds, that tower in storm, that beat
  Arterial thunder in their veins;
The wildflowers lifting, shyly sweet,
  Their perfect faces from the plains,—
All high, all lowly things of Earth
For no vague end have had their birth.

Low strips of mist, that mesh the moon
  Above the foaming waterfall;
And mountains that God's hand hath hewn,
  And forests where the great winds call,—
Within the grasp of such as see
Are parts of a conspiracy;

To seize the soul with beauty; hold
  The heart with love, and so fulfill
Within ourselves the Age of Gold,
  That never died, and never will,—
So long as one true nature feels
The wonders that the world reveals.

THE LOVE OF LOVES.

I HAVE not seen her face, and yet
She is more sweet than any thing
Of Earth — than rose or violet
That Mayday winds and sunbeams bring.
Of all we know, past or to come,
That beauty holds within its net,
She is the high compendium:
And yet —

I have not touched her robe, and still
She is more dear than lyric words
And music; or than strains that fill
The throbbing throats of forest birds.
Of all we mean by poetry,
That rules the soul and charms the will,
She is the deep epitome:
And still —

She is my world; ah, pity me!
A dream that flies whom I pursue;
Whom all pursue, whoe'er they be,
Who toil for art and dare and do.
The shadow-love for whom they sigh,
The far ideal affinity,
For whom they live and gladly die —
Ah, me!

THREE THINGS.

THERE are three things of Earth
That help us more
Than those of heavenly birth
That all implore —
Than Love or Faith or Hope,
For which we strive and grope.

Immortelles

The first one is Desire,—
  Who takes our hand
And fills our hearts with fire
  None may withstand;—
Through whom we're lifted far
Above both moon and star.

The second one is Dream,—
  Who leads our feet
By an immortal gleam
  To visions sweet;—
Through whom our forms put on
Dim attributes of dawn.

The last of these is Toil,—
  Who maketh true,
Within the world's turmoil
  The other two;—
Through whom we may behold
Ourselves with kings enrolled.

IMMORTELLES.

I.

AS some warm moment of repose
    In one rich rose
  Sums all the summer's lovely bloom
And pure perfume —
So did her soul epitomize
All hopes that make life wise,
Who lies before us now with lidded eyes,
  Faith's amaranth of truth
    Crowning her youth.

A Lullaby

II.

As some melodious note or strain
  May so contain
All of sweet music in one chord,
  Or lyric word —
So did her loving heart suggest
All dreams that make life blest,
Who lies before us now with pulseless breast,
  Love's asphodel of duty
    Crowning her beauty.

A LULLABY.

I.

IN her wimple of wind and her slippers of sleep
  The twilight comes like a little goose-girl,
Herding her owls with many "tu-whoos,"
Her little brown owls in the woodland deep,
Where dimly she walks in her whispering shoes,
And gown of glimmering pearl.

Sleep, sleep, little one, sleep;
  This is the road to Rockaby Town.
Rockaby, lullaby, where dreams are cheap;
  Here you can buy any dream for a crown.
Sleep, sleep, little one, sleep;
The cradle you lie in is soft and is deep,
  The wagon that takes you to Rockaby Town.
Now you go up, sweet, now you go down,
  Rockaby, lullaby, now you go down.

A Lullaby

II.

And after the twilight comes midnight, who wears
A mantle of purple so old, so old!
Who stables the lily-white moon, it is said,
In a wonderful chamber with violet stairs,
Up which you can see her come, silent of tread,
On hoofs of pale silver and gold.

Dream, dream, little one, dream;
This is the way to Lullaby Land.
Lullaby, rockaby, where, white as cream,
Sugar-plum bowers drop sweets in your hand.
Dream, dream, little one, dream;
The cradle you lie in is tight at each seam,
The boat that goes sailing to Lullaby Land.
Over the sea, sweet, over the sand,
Lullaby, rockaby, over the sand.

III.

The twilight and midnight are lovers, you know,
And each to the other is true, is true!
And there on the moon through the heavens they ride,
With the little brown owls all huddled arow,
Through meadows of heaven where, every side,
Blossom the stars and the dew.

Rest, rest, little one, rest;
Rockaby Town is in Lullaby Isle.
Rockaby, lullaby, set like a nest
Deep in the heart of a song and a smile.
Rest, rest, little one, rest;
The cradle you lie in is warm as my breast,
The white bird that bears you to Lullaby Isle.
Out of the East, sweet, into the West,
Rockaby, lullaby, into the West.

DUM VIVIMUS.

I.

NOW with the marriage of the lip and beaker
Let Joy be born! and in the rosy shine,
The slanting starlight of the lifted liquor,
Let Care, the hag, be drowned! No more repine
At all life's ills! Come, bury them in wine!
Room for great guests! Yea, let us usher in
Philosophies of old Anacreon
And Omar, that, from dawn to glorious dawn,
Shall lesson us in love and song and sin.

II.

Some lives need less than others.— Who can ever
Say truly "Thou art mine," of Happiness?
Death comes to all. And one, to-day, is never
Sure of to-morrow, that may ban or bless;
And what's beyond is but a shadowy guess.
"All, all is vanity," the preacher sighs;
And in this world what has more right than Wrong?
Come! let us hush remembrance with a song,
And learn with folly to be glad and wise.

III.

There was a poet of the East named Hafiz,
Who sang of wine and beauty. Let us go
Praising them too. And where good wine to quaff is
And maids to kiss, doff life's gray garb of woe;
For soon that tavern's reached, that inn, you know,
Where wine and love are not, where, sans disguise,
Each one must lie in his strait bed apart,
The thorn of sleep deep-driven in his heart,
And dust and darkness in his mouth and eyes.

FAILURE.

THERE are some souls
Whose lot it is to set their hearts on goals
That adverse Fate controls.

While others win
With little labor through life's dust and din,
And lord-like enter in

Immortal gates;
And, of Success the high-born intimates,
Inherit Fame's estates. . . .

Why is 't the lot
Of merit oft to struggle and yet not
Attain? to toil — for what?

Simply to know
The disappointment, the despair and woe
Of effort here below?

Ambitious still to reach
Those lofty peaks, which men aspiring preach,
For which their souls beseech:

Those heights that swell
Remote, removed, and unattainable,
Pinnacle on pinnacle:

Still yearning to attain
Their far repose, above life's stress and strain,
But all in vain, in vain! . . . .

Why hath God put
Great longings in some souls and straightway shut
All doors of their clay hut?

The Cup of Joy

The clay accurst
That holds achievement back; from which, immersed,
The spirit may not burst.

Were it, at least,
Not better to have sat at Circe's feast,
If afterwards a beast?

Than aye to bleed,
To strain and strive, to toil in thought and deed,
And nevermore succeed?

THE CUP OF JOY.

LET us mix a cup of Joy
That the wretched may employ,
Whom the Fates have made their toy.

Who have given brain and heart
To the thankless world of Art,
And from Fame have won no part.

Who have labored long at thought;
Starved and toiled and all for naught;
Sought and found not what they sought. . . .

Let our goblet be the skull
Of a fool; made beautiful
With a gold nor base nor dull:

Gold of madcap fancies, once
It contained, that,—sage or dunce,—
Each can read whoever runs.

First we pour the liquid light
Of our dreams in; then the bright
Beauty that makes day of night.

Pestilence

Let this be the must wherefrom,
In due time, the mettlesome
Care-destroying drink shall come.

Folly next: with which mix in
Laughter of a child of sin,
And the red of mouth and chin.

These shall give the tang thereto,
Effervescence and rich hue
Which to all good wine are due.

Then into our cup we press
One wild kiss of wantonness,
And a glance that says not less.

Sparkles both that give a fine
Lustre to the drink divine,
Necessary to good wine.

Lastly in the goblet goes
Sweet a love-song, then a rose
Warmed upon *her* breast's repose.

These bouquet our drink.— Now measure
With your arm the waist you treasure —
Lift the cup and, "Here's to Pleasure!"

PESTILENCE.

HIGH on a throne of noisome ooze and heat,
'Mid rotting trees of bayou and lagoon,
Ghastly she sits beneath the skeleton moon,
A tawny horror coiling at her feet —
Fever, whose eyes keep watching, serpent-like,
Until *her* eyes shall bid him rise and strike.

MUSINGS.

INSPIRATION.

ALL who have toiled for Art, who 've won or lost,
Sat equal priests at her high Pentecost;
Only the chrism and sacrament of flame,
Anointing all, inspired not all the same.

APPORTIONMENT.

How often in our search for joy below
Hoping for happiness we chance on woe.

VICTORY.

They who take courage from their own defeat
Are victors too, no matter how much beat.

PREPARATION.

How often hope's fair flower blooms richest where
The soul was fertilized with black despair.

DISILLUSION.

Those unrequited in their love who die
Have never drained life's chief illusion dry.

SUCCESS.

Success allures us in the earth and skies:
We seek to win her, but, too amorous,
Mocking, she flees us.— Haply, were we wise,
We would not strive and she would come to us.

SCIENCE.

Miranda-like, above the world she waves
The wand of Prospero; and, beautiful,
Ariel the airy, Caliban the dull,—
Lightning and steam,— are her unwilling slaves.

Musings

ECHO.

Dweller in hollow places, hills and rocks,
Daughter of Silence and old Solitude,
Tip-toe she stands within her cave or wood,
Her only life the noises that she mocks.

THE UNIVERSAL WIND.

Wild son of Heav'n, with laughter and alarm,
Now East, now West, now North, now South he goes,
Bearing in one harsh hand dark death and storm,
And in the other, sunshine and a rose.

COMPENSATION.

Yea, whom He loves the Lord God chasteneth
With disappointments, so that this side death,
Through suffering and failure, they know Hell
To make them worthy in that Heaven to dwell
Of Love's attainment, where they come to be
Parts of its beauty and divinity.

POPPIES.

Summer met Sleep at sunset,
Dreaming within the south,—
Drugged with his soul's deep slumber,
Red with her heart's hot drouth,
These are the drowsy kisses
She pressed upon his mouth.

HER EYES AND MOUTH.

There is no Paradise like that which lies
Deep in the heavens of her azure eyes :
There is no Eden here on Earth that glows
Like that which smiles rich in her mouth's red rose.

HER SOUL.

To me not only does her soul suggest
Palms and the peace of tropic shore and wood,
But, oceaned far beyond the golden West,
The Fortunate Islands of true Womanhood.

HER FACE.

The gladness of our Southern spring; the grace
Of summer; and the dreaminess of fall
Are parts of her sweet nature.— Such a face
Was Ruth's, methinks, divinely spiritual.

AT THE SIGN OF THE SKULL.

IT'S "Gallop and go!" and "Slow, now, slow!"
With every man in this life below—
But the things of this world are a fleeting show.

The postchaise Time that all must take
  Is old with clay and dust;
Two horses strain its rusty brake
  Named Pleasure and Disgust.

Our baggage totters on its roof,
  Of Vanity and Care,
As Hope, the postboy, spurs each hoof,
  Or heavy-eyed Despair.

And now a comrade with us rides,
  Love, haply, or Remorse;
And that dim traveler besides,
  Gaunt Memory on a horse.

A Cavalier's Toast

And be we king or be we kern
  Who ride the roads of Sin,
No matter how the roads may turn
  They lead us to that Inn.

Unto that Inn within that land
  Of silence and of gloom,
Whose ghastly landlord takes our hand
  And leads us to our room.

It's "Gallop and go!" and "Slow, now, slow!"
With every man in this life below —
But the things of this world are a fleeting show.

A CAVALIER'S TOAST.

I.

SOME drink to Friendship, some to Love,—
  Through whom the world is fair, perdie!—
But I to one these others prove,
Who leaps 'mid lions for a glove,
  Or dies to set another free —
    I drink to Loyalty.

II.

No dagger his, no cloak and mask,
  Free-faced he stands so all may see;
Let Friendship set him any task,
Or Love — reward he does not ask,
  The deed is done whate'er it be —
    So here's to Loyalty.

SLEEP IS A SPIRIT.

SLEEP is a spirit, who beside us sits,
Or through our frames like some dim glamour flits;
From out her form a pearly light is shed,
As from a lily, in a lily-bed,
A firefly's gleam. Her face is pale as stone,
And languid as a cloud that drifts alone
In starry heav'n. And her diaphanous feet
Are easy as the dew or opaline heat
Of summer.
Lo! with ears — aurora pink
As Dawn's — she leans and listens on the brink
Of being, dark with dreadfulness and doubt,
Wherein vague lights and shadows move about,
And palpitations beat — like some huge heart
Of Earth — the surging pulse of which we're part.
One hand, that hollows her divining eyes,
Glows like the curved moon over twilight skies;
And with her gaze she fathoms life and death —
Gulfs, where man's conscience, like a restless breath
Of wind, goes wand'ring; whispering low of things,
The irremediable, where sorrow clings.
Around her limbs a veil of woven mist
Wavers, and turns from fibered amethyst
To textured crystal; through which symboled bars
Of silver burn, and cabalistic stars
Of nebulous gold.
Shrouding her feet and hair,
Within this woof, fantastic, everywhere,
Dreams come and go; the instant images
Of things she sees and thinks; realities,
Shadows, with which her heart and fancy swarm
That in the veil take momentary form:
Now picturing heaven in celestial fire,
And now the hell of every soul's desire;
Hinting at worlds, God wraps in mystery,
Beyond the world we know and touch and see.

KENNST DU DAS LAND.

FROM THE GERMAN OF GOETHE.

KNOW'ST thou the land where the lemon-tree flowers;
The orange glows gold in the darkness of bowers,
Out of blue heaven a softer zephyr blows,
And still the myrtle, tall the laurel grows?
Know'st it indeed?
Thither, ah, me! ah, me!
Would I with thee, O my belovéd, flee.

Know'st thou the house? Columns support its beams,
Its long hall glitters and its gallery gleams;
And sculpture glows and asks, in marble mild,
"What have they done to thee, thou poor, poor child?"
Know'st it indeed?
Thither, ah, me! ah, me!
Would I with thee, O my protector, flee.

Know'st thou the mountain and its cloud-built bridge?
In mist the mule treads cautiously its ridge;
The dragon's ancient brood still haunts its caves;
Down the loud crag the plunging torrent raves.
Know'st it indeed?
Thither, ah, me! ah, me!
Our pathway leads! O father, let us flee!

AT MIDNIGHT.

AT midnight in the trysting wood
I wandered by the waterside,
When, soft as mist, before me stood
My sweetheart who had died.

But so unchanged was she, meseemed
That I had only dreamed her dead;
Glad in her eyes the love-light gleamed;
Her lips were warm and red.

What though the stars shone shadowy through
  Her form as by my side she went,
And by her feet no drop of dew
  Was stirred, no blade was bent!

What though through her white loveliness
  The wildflower dimmed, the moonlight paled,
Real to my touch she was; no less
  Than when the earth prevailed.

She took my hand. My heart beat wild.
  She kissed my mouth. I bowed my head.
Then gazing in my eyes, she smiled:
  "When did'st thou die?" she said.

THE MAN IN GRAY.

Written for the Reunion of the Confederate Veterans at Louisville, Ky., May and June, 1900.

I.

AGAIN, in dreams, the veteran hears
  The bugle and the drum;
Again the boom of battle nears,
  Again the bullets hum:
Again he mounts, again he cheers,
  Again his charge speeds home —
O memories of those long gone years!
  O years that are to come!

We live in dreams as well as deeds, in thoughts as well as acts;
And life through things we feel, not know, is realized the most;
The conquered are the conquerors, despite the face of facts,
If they still feel their cause was just who fought for it and lost.

II.

Again, in thought, he hears at dawn
The far reveille die ;
Again he marches stern and wan
Beneath a burning sky :
He bivouacs ; the night comes on ;
His comrades 'round him lie —
O memories of the years long gone !
O years that now go by !

The vintager of Earth is War, is War whose grapes are men ;
Into his wine-vats armies go, his wine-vats steaming red :
The crimson vats of battle where he stalks, as in a den,
Drunk with the must of Hell that spurts beneath his iron tread.

III.

Again, in mind, he's lying where
The trenches slay with heat ;
Again his flag floats o'er him, fair
In charge or fierce retreat :
Again all 's lost ; again despair
Makes death seem three times sweet —
O years of tears that crowned his hair
With laurels of defeat !

There is reward for those who dare, for those who dare and do ;
Who face the dark inevitable, who fall and know no shame :
Upon their banner triumph sits and in the horn they blew, —
Naught's lost if honor be not lost, defeat is but a name.

HALLOWE'EN.

IT was down in the woodland on last Hallowe'en,
Where silence and darkness had built them a lair,
That I felt the dim presence of her, the unseen,
And heard her still step on the ghost-haunted air.

The Image in the Glass

It was last Hallowe'en in the glimmer and swoon
  Of mist and of moonlight that thickened and thinned,
That I saw the gray gleam of her eyes in the moon,
  And hair, like a raven, blown wild in the wind.

It was last Hallowe'en where starlight and dew
  Made mystical marriage on flower and leaf,
That she led me with looks of a love that I knew,
  And lured with the voice of a heart-buried grief.

It was last Hallowe'en in the forest of dreams,
  Where trees are eidolons and shadows have eyes,
That I saw her pale face like the foam of far streams,
  And heard, like the leaf-lisp, her tears and her sighs.

It was last Hallowe'en, the haunted, the dread,
  In the wind-tattered wood by the storm-twisted pine,
That I, who am living, kept tryst with the dead,
  And clasped her a moment and dreamed she was mine.

THE IMAGE IN THE GLASS.

I.

THE slow reflection of a woman's face
  Grew, as by witchcraft, in the oval space
  Of that strange glass on which the moon looked in :—
As cruel as death beneath the auburn hair
The dark eyes burned; and, o'er the faultless chin,—
Evil as night yet as the daybreak fair,—
Rose-red and sensual smiled the mouth of sin.

II.

The glorious throat and shoulders and, twin crests
Of snow, the splendid beauty of the breasts,
Filled soul and body with the old desire.—
Daughter of darkness ! how could this thing be ?
You, whom I loathed ! for whom my heart's fierce fire
Had burnt to ashes of satiety !
You, who had sunk my soul in all that's dire !

The Image in the Glass

III.

How came your image there? and in that room!
Where she, the all adored, my life's sweet bloom,
Died poisoned! She, my scarcely one week's bride —
Yea, poisoned by a gift you sent to her,
Thinking her death would win me to your side.
And so it did! but . . . . well, it made some stir —
By your own hand, I think, they said you died.

IV.

Time passed. And then — was it the curse of crime,
That night of nights, which forced my feet to climb
To that locked bridal-room? — 'T was midnight when
A longing, like to madness, mastered me,
Compelled me to that chamber, which for ten
Sad years was sealed; a dark necessity
To gaze upon — I knew not what again.

V.

Love's ghost, perhaps. Or, in the curvature
Of that strange mirror, something that might cure
The ache in me — some message, said perchance
Of her dead loveliness, which once it glassed,
That might repeat again my lost romance
In momentary pictures of the past,
While in its depths her image swam in trance.

VI.

I did not dream to see the soulless eyes
Of you I hated; nor the lips where lies
And kisses curled; your features, — that were tuned
To all demonic, — smiling up as might
Some deep damnation! while . . . . my God! I swooned! . . . .
Oozed slowly out, between the breast's dead white,
The ghastly red of that wide dagger-wound.

HER PRAYER.

SHE kneels with haggard eyes and hair
Unto the Christ upon the Cross:
Her gown is torn; her feet are bare.

What is this thing she begs of him,
The gentle Christ upon the Cross?
Her hands are clasped; her face is dim.

Is it forgiveness for her sin,
She asks of Christ upon the Cross?
And mercy for the soul within?

With anguished face, so sad and sweet,
She kneels to Christ upon the Cross:
Her arms embrace his nail-pierced feet.

Her tears run slowly down her face,
O piteous Christ upon the Cross!
And through her tears she sighs and says:—

"The thing that I would crave of Thee,
O Christ upon the cruel Cross,
Is not a thing to comfort me.

"Thou, who hast taught us to forgive,
O tender Christ upon the Cross,
Help Thou my love for *him* to live.

"Oh, let the love that was my fall,
O loving Christ upon the Cross,
Still to my life be all in all.

"With love for him who loves no more,
O patient Christ upon the Cross,
Make Thou my punishment full sore."

She kneels with haggard eyes and hair
Unto the Christ upon the Cross:
Her gown is torn; her feet are bare.

THE MESSAGE OF THE LILIES.

MY soul and I went walking
Beneath the moon of Spring;
The lilies pale were talking,
Were faintly murmuring.

From dimly moonlit places
They thrust long throats of white,
And lovely lifted faces
Of fragrant snow and light.

Their language was an essence,
Yet clearer than a bird's;
And from it grew a presence
As music grows from words.

A spirit born of silence
And chastity and dew
Among Elysian islands
Were not more white to view.

A spirit born of fire
And holiness and snow
Within the Heavens' desire,
Were not more pure to know.

HE smiled amid them lifting
Pale hands of prayer and peace —
And through the moonlight, drifting,
Came words to me like these:

"We are His lilies, lilies,
Whose praises aye we sing!
We are the lilies, lilies
Of Christ our Lord and King!"

A LEGEND OF THE LILY.

PALE as a star that shines through rain
Her face was seen at the window-pane,
Her sad, frail face that watched in vain.

The face of a girl whose brow was wan,
To whom the kind sun spoke at dawn,
And a star and the moon when the day was gone.

And oft and often the sun had said —
"O fair, white face, O sweet, fair head,
Come talk with me of the love that's dead."

And she would sit in the sun awhile,
Down in the garth by the old stone-dial,
Where never again would he make her smile.

And often the first bright star o'erhead
Had whispered, "Sweet, where the rose blooms red,
Come look with me for the love that 's dead."

And she would wait with the star she knew,
Where the fountain splashed and the roses blew,
Where never again would he come to woo.

And oft the moon, when she lay in bed,
Had sighed, "Dear heart, in the orchardstead,
Come, dream with me of the love that 's dead."

And she would stand in the moon, the dim,
Where the fruit made heavy the apple limb,
Where never again would she dream with him.

A Legend of the Lily

So summer passed and the autumn came;
And the wind-torn boughs were touched with flame;
But her life and her sorrow remained the same.

Or, if she changed, as it comes about
A life may change through trouble and doubt,—
As a candle flickers and then goes out,—

'T was only to grow more quiet and wan,
Sadly waiting at dusk and at dawn
For the coming of love forever gone.

And so, one night, when the star looked in,
It kissed her face that was white and thin,
And murmured, "Come! thou free of sin!"

And when the moon, on another night,
Beheld her lying still and white,
It sighed, "'T is well! now all is right."

And when one morning the sun arose,
And they bore her bier down the garden-close,
It touched her, saying, "At last, repose."

And they laid her down, so young and fair,
Where the grass was withered, the bough was bare,
All wrapped in the light of her golden hair. . . . .

So autumn passed and the winter went;
And spring, like a blue-eyed penitent,
Came, telling her beads of blossom and scent.

And, lo! to the grave of the beautiful
The strong sun cried, "Why art thou dull?
Awake! awake! Forget thy skull!"

And the evening star and the moon above
Called out, "O dust, now speak thereof!
Proclaim thyself! Arise, O love!"

The End of the Century

And the skull and the dust in the darkness heard.
Each icy germ in its cerements stirred,
As Lazarus moved at the Lord's loud word.

And a flower arose on the mound of green,
White as the robe of the Nazarene;
To testify of the life unseen.

And I paused by the grave; then went my way:
And it seemed that I heard the lily say—
"Here was a miracle wrought to-day."

THE END OF THE CENTURY.

THERE are moments when, as missions,
God reveals to us strange visions;
When, within their separate stations,
We may see the Centuries,
Like revolving constellations
Shaping out Earth's destinies.

I have gazed in Time's abysses,
Where no smallest thing Earth misses
That was hers once. 'Mid her chattels,
There the Past's gigantic ghost
Sits and dreams of thrones and battles
In the night of ages lost.

Far before her eyes, unholy
Mist was spread; that darkly, slowly
Rolled aside, — like some huge curtain
Hung above the land and sea; —
And beneath it, wild, uncertain,
Rose the wraiths of memory.

The End of the Century

First I saw colossal spectres
Of dead cities: Troy — once Hector's
Pride; then Babylon and Tyre;
  Karnac, Carthage, and the gray
Walls of Thebes, — Apollo's lyre
  Built; — and Rome and Nineveh.

Empires followed: first, in seeming,
Old Chaldea lost in dreaming;
Egypt next, a bulk Memnonian
  Staring from her pyramids;
Then Assyria, Babylonian
  Night beneath her hell-lit lids.

Greece, in classic white, sidereal
Armored; Rome, in dark, imperial
Purple, crowned with blood and fire,
  Down the deeps barbaric strode;
Gaul and Britain stalking by her,
  Skin-clad and tattooed with woad.

All around them, rent and scattered,
Lay their gods with features battered,
Brute and human, stone and iron,
  Caked with gems and gnarled with gold;
Temples, that did once environ
  These, in wreck around them rolled.

While I stood and gazed and waited,
Slowly night obliterated
All; and other phantoms drifted
  Out of darkness pale as stars;
Shapes that tyrant faces lifted,
  Sultans, kings, and emperors.

Man and steed in ponderous metal
Panoplied, they seemed to settle,
Condors gaunt of devastation,

The End of the Century

On the world: behind their march —
Desolation; conflagration
Loomed before them with her torch.

Helmets flamed like fearful flowers;
Chariots rose and moving towers;
Captains passed; each fierce commander
With his gauntlet on his sword:
Agamemnon, Alexander,
Cæsar, each led on his horde.

Huns and Vandals; wild invaders:
Goths and Arabs; stern Crusaders:
Each, like some terrific torrent,
Rolled above a ruined world;
Till a cataract abhorrent
Seemed the swarming spears uphurled.

Banners and escutcheons, kindled
By the light of slaughter, dwindled —
Died in darkness; — the chimera
Of the Past was laid at last.
But, behold, another era
From her corpse rose, vague and vast.

Demogorgon of the Present!
Who in one hand raised a Crescent,
In the other, with submissive
Fingers, lifted up a Cross;
Reverent and yet derisive
Seemed she, robed in gold and dross.

In her skeptic eyes professions
Of great faith I saw; expressions,
Christian and humanitarian,
Played around her cynic lip;
Still I knew her a barbarian
By the sword upon her hip.

And she cherished strange eidolons,
Pagan shadows — Platos, Solons —
From whose teachings she indentured
  Forms of law and sophistry ;
Seeking still for truth she ventured
  Just so far as these could see.

When she vanished, I — uplifting
Eyes to where the dawn was rifting
Darkness, — lo ! beheld a shadow
  Towering on Earth's utmost peaks ;
'Round whom morning's eldorado
  Rivered gold in blinding streaks.

On her brow I saw the stigma
Still of death ; and life's enigma
Filled her eyes : around her shimmered
  Folds of silence ; and afar,
Faint above her forehead, glimmered
  Lone the light of one pale star.

Then a voice, — above or under
Earth, — against her seemed to thunder
Questions, wherein was repeated,
  " Christ or Cain ? " and " God or beast ? "
And the Future, shadowy-sheeted,
  Turning, pointed towards the East.

THE ISLE OF VOICES.

THE wind blew free that morn that we,
  High-hearted, sailed away ;
Bound for Favonian islands blest,
Remote within the utmost West,
  Beyond the golden day.

The Isle of Voices

There, we were told, each dream of old,
  Each deed and dream of youth,
Each myth of life's divinest prime,
And every romance, dear to time,
  Put on immortal truth.

The love undone, the aim unwon,
  The hope that turned despair;
The thought unborn; the dream that died;
The unattained, unsatisfied,
  Should be accomplished there.

So we believed. And, undeceived,
  A little crew set sail;
A little crew with hearts as stout
As any yet that faced a doubt
  And tore away its veil.

And time went by; and sea and sky
  Had worn our masts and decks;
When, lo! one morn with canvas torn,
A phantom ship, we came forlorn
  Into the Sea of Wrecks.

There, day and night, the mist lay white,
  And pale stars shone at noon;
The sea around was foam and fire,
And overhead hung wan a wire,
  A will-o'-wisp of moon.

And through the mist, all white and whist,
  Gaunt ships, with sea-weed wound,
With rotting masts, upon whose spars
The corposants lit spectre stars,
  Sailed by without a sound.

And all about,— now in, now out,—
  Their ancient hulls was shed
The worm-like glow of green decay,
That writhed and glimmered in the gray
  Of canvas overhead.

And each that passed, in hull and mast,
  Seemed that wild ship that flees
Before the tempest — seamen tell —
Deep-cargoed with the curse of Hell,
  Through roaring night and seas.

Ay ! many a craft we left abaft
  Upon that haunted sea ;
But never a hulk that clewed a sail,
Or waved a hand, or answered hail,
  And never a man saw we.

At last we came where — pouring flame —
  In darkness and in storm,
A vast volcano westward reared
An awful summit, lava-seared,
  Like some terrific arm.

And we could feel beneath our keel
  The ocean throb and swell,
As if the Earthquake there uncoiled
Its monster bulk, or Titans toiled
  At the red heart of Hell.

Like madmen now we turned our prow
  North, towards an ocean weird
Of Northern Lights and icy blasts ;
And for ten moons with reeling masts
  And leaking hold we steered.

Then black as blood through streaming scud
  Land loomed above our boom,
A land of iron gulfs and crags
And cataracts, like wind-tossed rags,
  And caverns lost in gloom.

And burning white on every height,
  And white in every cave,
A naked spirit, with a flame,
Now gleamed, now vanished ; went and came
  Above the whining wave.

The Isle of Voices

No mortal thing of foot or wing
  Made glad its steep and strand;
But voices, voices seemingly —
Vague voices of the sky and sea —
  Peopled the demon land.

Yea, everywhere, in earth and air,
  A lamentation wept;
That, gathering strength above, below,
Now like a mighty wind of woe,
  Around the island swept.

And in that sound, it seemed, was bound
  All life's despair of art;
The bitterness of joy that died;
The anguish of faith's crucified;
  And love that broke its heart.

The ghost it seemed of all we'd dreamed,
  Of all we had desired;
That — turned a curse, an empty cry —
With wailing words went trailing by
  In hope's dead robes attired.

And could this be the land that we
  Had sought for soon and late?
Those Islands of the Blest, the fair,
Where we had hoped to ease our care
  And end the fight with fate?

O lie that lured! O pain endured!
  O years of toil and thirst!
Where we had looked for blesséd ground
The Islands of the Damned we found,
  And in the end — were curst!

A. D. NINETEEN HUNDRED.

WAR and Disaster, Famine and Pestilence,
Vaunt-couriers of the Century that comes,
Behold them shaking their tremendous plumes
Above the world ! where all the air grows dense
With rumors of destruction and a sense,
Cadaverous, of corpses and of tombs
Predestined ; while,—like monsters in the glooms,—
Bristling with battle, shadowy and immense,
The Nations rise in wild apocalypse.—
Where now the boast Earth makes of civilization ?
Its brag of Christianity ?—In vain
We seek to see them in the dread eclipse
Of hell and horror, all the devastation
Of Death triumphant on his hills of slain.

CAVERNS.

Written of Colossal Cave, Kentucky.

AISLES and abysses ; leagues no man explores,
Of rock that labyrinths and night that drips ;
Where everlasting silence broods, with lips
Of adamant, o'er earthquake-builded floors.
Where forms, such as the Demon-World adores,
Laborious water carves ; whence echo slips
Wild-tongued o'er pools where petrifaction strips
Her breasts of crystal from which crystal pours.—
Here where primordial fear, the Gorgon, sits
Staring all life to stone in ghastly mirth,
I seem to tread, with awe no tongue can tell,—
Beneath vast domes, by torrent-tortured pits,
'Mid wrecks terrific of the ruined Earth,—
An ancient causeway of forgotten Hell.

OF THE SLUMS.

RED-FACED as old carousal, and with eyes
A hard, hot blue; her hair a frowsy flame,
Bold, dowdy-bosomed, from her widow-frame
She leans, her mouth all insult and all lies.
Or slattern-slippered and in sluttish gown,
With ribald mirth and words too vile to name,
A new Doll Tearsheet, glorying in her shame,
Armed with her Falstaff now she takes the town.
The flaring lights of alley-way saloons,
The reek of hideous gutters and black oaths
Of drunkenness from vice-infested dens,
Are to her senses what the silvery moon's
Chaste splendor is, and what the blossoming growths
Of earth and bird-song are to innocence.

THE WINDS.

THOSE hewers of the clouds, the winds, — that lair
At the four compass-points, — are out to-night;
I hear their sandals trample on the height,
I hear their voices trumpet through the air.
Builders of Storm, God's workmen, now they bear,
Up the steep stair of sky, on backs of might,
Huge tempest bulks, while, — sweat that blinds their sight, —
The rain is shaken from tumultuous hair:
Now, sweepers of the firmament, they broom,
Like gathered dust, the rolling mists along
Heaven's floors of sapphire; all the beautiful blue
Of skyey corridor and aëry room
Preparing, with large laughter and loud song,
For the white moon and stars to wander through.

PROTOTYPES.

WHETHER it be that we in letters trace
The pure exactness of a woodbird's strain,
And name it song; or with the brush attain
The high perfection of a wildflower's face;
Or mold in difficult marble all the grace
We know as man; or from the wind and rain
Catch elemental rapture of refrain
And mark in music to due time and place:
The aim of art is nature; to unfold
Her truth and beauty to the souls of men
In close suggestions; in whose forms is cast
Nothing so new but 'tis long eons old;
Nothing so old but 'tis as young as when
The mind conceived it in the ages past.

TOUCHES.

IN heavens of rivered blue, that sunset dyes
With glaucous flame, deep in the west the Day
Stands Midas-like; or, wading on his way,
Touches with splendor all the twilight skies.
Each cloud that, like a stepping-stone, he tries
With rosy foot, transforms its sober gray
To burning gold; while, ray on crystal ray,
Within his wake the stars like bubbles rise.
So should the artist in his work accord
All things with beauty, and communicate
His soul's high magic and divinity
To all he does; and, hoping no reward,
Toil onward, making darkness aureate
With light of worlds that are and worlds to be.

THE WOMAN SPEAKS.

WHY have you come? to see me in my shame?
A thing to spit on, to despise and scorn?—
And then to ask me! You, by whom was torn
And then cast by, like some vile rag, my name!
What shelter could you give me, now, that blame
And loathing would not share? that wolves of vice
Would not besiege with eyes of glaring ice?
Wherein Sin sat not with her face of flame?
"You love me"?— God! — If yours be love, for lust
Hell must invent another synonym!
If yours be love, then hatred is the way
To Heaven and God! and not with soul but dust
Must burn the faces of the Cherubim,—
O lie of lies, if yours be love, I say!

LOVE, THE INTERPRETER.

THOU art the music that I hear in sleep,
The poetry that lures me on in dreams;
The magic, thou, that holds my thought with themes
Of young romance in revery's mystic keep.
The lily's aura, and the damask deep
That clothes the rose; the whispering soul that seems
To haunt the wind; the rainbow light that streams,
Like some wild spirit, 'thwart the cataract's leap —
Are glimmerings of thee and thy loveliness,
Pervading all my world; interpreting
The marvel and the wonder these disclose:
For, lacking thee, to me were meaningless
Life, love and hope, the joy of every thing,
And all the beauty that the wide world knows.

UNANSWERED.

HOW long ago it is since we went Maying!
Since she and I went Maying long ago!
The years have left my forehead lined, I know,
Have thinned my hair around the temples graying.
Ah, time will change us; yea, I hear it saying,—
"She, too, grows old: the face of rose and snow
Has lost its freshness: in the hair's brown glow
Some strands of silver sadly, too, are straying.
The form you knew, whose beauty so enspelled,
Has lost the litheness of its loveliness:
And all the gladness that her blue eyes held
Tears and the world have hardened with distress."—
"True! true!" I answer, "O ye years that part!
These things are changed, but is her heart, her heart?"

EARTH AND MOON.

I SAW the day like some great monarch die,
Gold-couched, behind the clouds' rich tapestries.
Then, purple-sandaled, clad in silences
Of sleep, through halls of skyey lazuli,
The twilight, like a mourning queen, trailed by,
Dim-paged of dreams and shadowy mysteries;
And now the night, the star-robed child of these,
In meditative loveliness draws nigh.
Earth, — like to Romeo, — deep in dew and scent,
Beneath Heaven's window, watching till a light,
Like some white blossom, in its square be set,—
Lifts a faint face unto the firmament,
That, with the moon, grows gradually bright,
Bidding him climb and clasp his Juliet.

PEARLS.

BAROQUE, but beautiful, between the lunes,
The valves of nacre of a mussel-shell,
Behold, a pearl! shaped like the burnished bell
Of some strange blossom that long afternoons
Of summer coax to open: all the moon's
Chaste lustre in it; hues that only dwell
With purity. . . . It takes me, like a spell,
Back to a day when, whistling truant tunes,
A barefoot boy I waded 'mid the rocks,
Searching for shells deep in the creek's slow swirl,
Unconscious of the pearls that 'round me lay:
While, 'mid wild-roses,— all her tomboy locks
Blond-blowing, — stood, unnoticed then, a girl,
My sweetheart once, the pearl I flung away.

IN THE FOREST.

ONE well might deem, among these miles of woods,
Such were the Forests of the Holy Grail,—
Broceliand and Dean; where, clothed in mail,
The Knights of Arthur rode, and all the broods
Of legend laired.—And, where no sound intrudes
Upon the ear, except the glimmering wail
Of some far bird; or, in some flowery swale,
A brook that murmurs to the solitudes,
Might think he hears the laugh of Vivien
Blent with the moan of Merlin, muttering bound
By his own magic to one stony spot;
And in the cloud, that looms above the glen,—
In which the sun burns like the Table Round,—
Might dream he sees the towers of Camelot.

ENCHANTMENT.

THE deep seclusion of this forest path,—
O'er which the green boughs weave a canopy,
Along which bluet and anemone
Spread a dim carpet; where the twilight hath
Her dark abode; and, sweet as aftermath,
Wood-fragrance breathes,—has so enchanted me,
That yonder blossoming bramble seems to be
Some sylvan resting, rosy from her bath:
Has so enspelled me with tradition's dreams,
That every foam-white stream that twinkling flows,
And every bird that flutters wings of tan,
Or warbles hidden, to my fancy seems
A Naiad dancing to a Faun who blows
Wild woodland music on the pipes of Pan.

DUSK.

CORN-COLORED clouds upon a sky of gold,
And 'mid their sheaves,—where, like a daisy bloom
Left by the reapers to the gathering gloom,
The star of twilight flames,—as Ruth, 't is told,
Dreamed homesick 'mid the harvest fields of old,
The Dusk goes gleaning color and perfume
From Bible slopes of heaven, that illume
Her pensive beauty deep in shadows stoled.
Hushed is the forest; and blue vale and hill
Are still, save for the brooklet, sleepily
Stumbling the stone, its foam like some white foot:
Save for the note of one far whippoorwill,
And in my heart *her* name,—like some sweet bee
Within a flow'r,—blowing a fairy flute.

THE BLUE BIRD.

FROM morn till noon upon the window-pane
The tempest tapped with rainy finger-nails,
And all the afternoon the blustering gales
Beat at the door with furious feet of rain.
The rose, near which the lily bloom lay slain,
Like some red wound dripped by the garden rails,
On which the sullen slug left slimy trails —
Meseemed the sun would never shine again.
Then in the drench, long, loud and full of cheer, —
A skyey herald tabarded in blue, —
A bluebird bugled . . . and at once a bow
Was bent in heaven, and I seemed to hear
God's sapphire spaces crystallizing through
The strata'd clouds in azure tremolo.

CAN SUCH THINGS BE?

MESEEMED that while she played, while lightly yet
Her fingers fell, as roses bloom by bloom,
I listened — dead within a mighty room
Of some old palace where great casements let
Gaunt moonlight in, that glimpsed a parapet
Of statued marble : in the arrased gloom
Majestic pictures towered, dim as doom,
The dreams of Titian and of Tintoret.
And then, it seemed, along a corridor,
A mile of oak, a stricken footstep came,
Hurrying, yet slow . . . I thought long centuries
Passed ere she entered — she, I loved of yore,
For whom I died, who wildly wailed my name
And bent and kissed me on the mouth and eyes.

THE PASSING GLORY.

SLOW sinks the sun,— a great carbuncle ball
Red in the cavern of a sombre cloud,—
And in her garden, where the dense weeds crowd,
Among her dying asters stands the Fall,
Like some lone woman in a ruined hall,
Dreaming of desolation and the shroud;
Or through decaying woodlands goes, down-bowed,
Hugging the tatters of her gipsy shawl.
The gaunt wind rises, like an angry hand,
And sweeps the sprawling spider from its web,
Smites frantic music in the twilight's ear;
And all around, like melancholy sand,
Rains dead leaves down — wild leaves, that mark the ebb,
In Earth's dark hour-glass, of another year.

SEPTEMBER.

THE bubbled blue of morning-glory spires,
Balloon-blown foam of moonflowers, and sweet snows
Of clematis, through which September goes,
Song-hearted, rich in realized desires,
Are flanked by hotter hues: by tawny fires
Of acrid marigolds, — that light long rows
Of lamps, — and salvias, red as day's red close,—
That torches seem,— by which the Month attires
Barbaric beauty; like some Asian queen,
Towering imperial in her two-fold crown
Of harvest and of vintage; all her form
Majestic gold and purple: in her mien
The might of motherhood; her baby brown,
Abundance, high on one exultant arm.

HOODOO.

SHE mutters and stoops by the lone bayou —
The little green leaves are hushed on the trees —
An owl in an oak cries "Who-oh-who,"
And a fox barks back where the moon slants through
The moss that sways to a sudden breeze . . .
Or *That* she sees,
Whose eyes are coals in the light o' the moon. —
"*Soon, oh, soon,*" hear her croon,
"*Woe, oh, woe to the octoroon!*"

She mutters and kneels and her bosom is bare —
The little green leaves are stirred on the trees —
A black bat brushes her unkempt hair,
And the hiss of a snake glides 'round her there . . .
Or is it the voice of the ghostly breeze,
Or *That* she sees,
Whose mouth is flame in the light o' the moon? —
"*Soon, oh, soon,*" hear her croon,
"*Woe, oh, woe to the octoroon!*"

She mutters and digs and buries it deep —
The little green leaves are wild on the trees —
And nearer and nearer the noises creep,
That gibber and maunder and whine and weep . . .
Or is it the wave and the weariless breeze,
Or *That* she sees,
Which hobbles away in the light o' the moon? —
"*Soon, oh, soon,*" hear her croon,
"*Woe, oh, woe to the octoroon!*"

. . . . . .

The Other Woman

In the hut where the other girl sits with him —
  The little green leaves hang limp on the trees —
All on a sudden the moon grows dim . . .
Is it the shadow of cloud or of limb,
  Cast in the door by the moaning breeze ?
    Or *That* she sees,
Which limps and leers in the light o' the moon ? —
    " *Soon, oh, soon,*" hear it croon,
" *Woe, oh, woe to the octoroon !* "

It has entered in at the open door —
  The little green leaves fall dead from the trees —
And she in the cabin lies stark on the floor,
And she in the woods has her lover once more . . .
  And — is it the hoot of the dying breeze ?
    Or *him* who sees,
Who mocks and laughs in the light o' the moon : —
    " *Soon, oh, soon,*" hear him croon,
" *Woe, oh, woe to the octoroon !* "

THE OTHER WOMAN.

YOU have shut me out from your tears and grief
  Over the man laid low and hoary.
  Listen to me now : I am no thief !—
You have shut me out from your tears and grief,—
  Listen to me, I will tell my story.

The love of a man is transitory.—
  What do you know of his past ? the years
He gave to another his manhood's glory ?—
The love of a man is transitory.
  Listen to me now : open your ears.

A Song for Labor

Over the dead have done with tears !
  Over the man who loved to madness
Me the woman you met with sneers,—
Over the dead have done with tears !
  Me the woman so sunk in badness.

He loved me ever, and that is gladness !—
  There by the dead now tell *her* so ;
There by the dead where she bows in sadness.—
He loved me ever, and that is gladness !—
  Mine the gladness and hers the woe.

The best of his life was mine. Now go,
  Tell her this that her pride may perish,
Her with his name, his wife, you know !
The best of his life was mine. Now go,
  Tell her this so she cease to cherish.

Bury him then with pomp and flourish !
  Bury him now without my kiss !
Here is a thing for your hearts to nourish,—
Bury him then with pomp and flourish !
  Bury him now I have told you this.

A SONG FOR LABOR.

I.

OH, the morning meads, the dewy meads,
  Where he ploughs and harrows and sows the seeds,
Singing a song of manly deeds,
  In the blossoming springtime weather ;
The heart in his bosom as high as the word
Said to the sky by the mating bird,
While the beat of an answering heart is heard,
  His heart and love's together.

A Song for Labor

II.

Oh, the noonday heights, the sunny heights,
Where he stoops to the harvest his keen scythe smites,
Singing a song of the work that requites,
In the ripening summer weather;
The soul in his body as light as the sigh
Of the little cloud-breeze that cools the sky,
While he hears an answering soul reply,
His soul and love's together.

III.

Oh, the evening vales, the twilight vales,
Where he labors and sweats to the thud of flails,
Singing a song of the toil that avails,
In the fruitful autumn weather;
In heart and in soul as free from fears
As the first white star in the sky that clears,
While the music of life and of love he hears,
Of life and of love together.